

ROWLAND HILL  
NOT THE ORIGINATOR  
OF THE  
PENNY POSTAGE STAMP,  
BUT  
*Francis Worrell Stevens,*  
FORMERLY OF LOUGHTON, ESSEX, ENGLAND, AND  
NOW OF DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND,  
IS THE INVENTOR AND ORIGINATOR  
OF THE ADHESIVE AND UNIVERSAL  
PENNY POSTAGE STAMP.

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Dunedin:  
COULLS AND CULLING, PRINTERS, RATTRAY STREET.  
1877.

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J. H. L. 106.5215  
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# PREFACE.

HAVING read an announcement in the *Home News* and other papers that the Inhabitants of Kidderminster and the general public were about to erect a Memorial in honor of Rowland Hill as the ORIGINATOR of the adhesive and universal Penny Postage Stamp, I could no longer remain silent, as I feel it my duty to the public, to myself, and to my family, to place on record the fact that I am the Originator of the Penny Postage Stamp and not Rowland Hill, as is generally supposed.

FRANCIS WORRELL STEVENS.

Dunedin, New Zealand,

June 5, 1877.

*Her Most Excellent Majesty the Queen.*

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The humble petition of FRANCIS WORRELL STEVENS, of  
Dunedin, New Zealand, formerly of Loughton, Essex,  
England

SHEWETH—

That in the reign of William the Fourth your petitioner, submitted to Lord Althorp, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, the important measure of a universal penny postage stamp.

That a correspondence between his Lordship and your petitioner took place relative to the said Penny Postage Stamp, and your petitioner received his Lordship's thanks in letters signed by his secretary.

Lord Althorp's stay in office being short, the correspondence can be referred to, which is in Downing street.

Some years after this Rowland Hill published a pamphlet, and in 1840 carried out the plan which your petitioner had suggested; but your petitioner was not aware that Rowland Hill applied for or received a reward.

Rowland Hill has the credit of carrying out the plan, but that is all. Your petitioner is the originator of the system that has been found so beneficial socially and commercially.

Your petitioner thinks Rowland Hill should not have withheld the source from whence he derived his information, but have allowed your petitioner to have at least shared the honour with him, and your petitioner thinks he has been greatly wronged.

Your petitioner humbly prays that the correspondence in Downing street may be referred to between himself and Lord Althorp on the subject of the Penny Postage Stamp in the reign of William the Fourth which was before Rowland Hill came into notice.

Your petitioner sent drawings in the letters referred to thus—

Government Stamp.



One Penny Postage.

Your petitioner thought the Royal Arms preferable to the portrait of William the Fourth, as he was aged.

After your Majesty ascended the throne, Rowland Hill brought out your petitioner's plan, putting a likeness of your Majesty instead of the Royal Arms, but this change should not deprive your petitioner of the honour of having been the originator; for either way it was still the Penny Postage Stamp, and your petitioners' invention, and not Rowland Hill's.

Your petitioner humbly prays that the records may be searched and that some acknowledgement may be conferred.

And your petitioner, as in duty bound, will ever pray,

FRANCIS WORRELL STEVENS.

Dunedin, New Zealand.

February 20, 1877,

The following is a letter written by my wife to the Rev. T. Rowsell, Chaplain in ordinary to the Queen:—

Dunedin, New Zealand,

February 17, 1877.

MY DEAR MR. ROWSELL,—

It is now so very many years since I had the pleasure of seeing you, that I presume you have entirely forgotten me—indeed I have become quite an old lady. You may,

however, recall to your recollection Barbara Vickers, but Barbara Stevens now, and for the last 46 years married to my dear husband (and I may say without one day's regret), whose likeness and my own I enclose. The many happy days I spent with your dear mother, brothers and sisters, at Hornsey and Newington I cannot but look back to with pleasure.

You recollect my brother, Charles Vickers, the Stock Broker, I dare say; he is now dead, having left a large fortune.

I and my brother Samuel, now in New Zealand, are all that are left of a family of ten.

Your sister Jane was my most intimate friend, as we were about the same ages; if you mention my maiden name, Barbara Vickers, to your sister, Lady Charles Barry, she will recollect our family well, as she and her sister, Mrs. Frederick Barry, were frequently staying at our house, and I think I was then a little favourite.

My husband is the real inventor and proposer of the Penny Postage Stamp, and not Sir Rowland Hill, as is generally supposed; and we think it very hard that Sir Rowland Hill should receive a reward, whilst Mr. Stevens gets neither the honour nor reward.

I was married in 1830, and a year or so afterwards my husband submitted his plan to Lord Althorp, in the reign of William the Fourth, long before Rowland Hill.

I saw my husband's letters to Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and his Lordship's replies, signed by his secretary—and Rowland Hill brought out Mr. Stevens's plan some time afterwards; no doubt he obtained his information from my husband's letters.

My husband wishes to lay this statement before Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen, in the enclosed petition.

Will you, my dear Mr. Rowsell, be so good and so kind as to present to our dear and beloved Queen the petition for Her Majesty's perusal.

I feel assured you will be interested in its perusal also.

Trusting you will enjoy long life and happiness, believe me to remain, my dear Mr. Rowsell,

Your affectionate cousin,

BARBARA STEVENS.

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Dunedin, New Zealand,

February 20, 1877.

The Rev. T. Rowsell,

DEAR SIR,—May I be permitted to add a few words to those of my wife, in aid of the favour she has asked. I think in justice to me, Rowland Hill should not have withheld the source from whence he derived his information, so that I might at least have shared the honour with him.

I am told he published a pamphlet on the Penny Postage System in 1837, but he was careful not to send me one, and it happened that I never heard of it till quite lately.

My plan of an adhesive universal Penny Postage Stamp was the subject of a considerable correspondence between myself and Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer, during William the Fourth's reign.

I would disdain to wear the laurels due to others, but some men are not so scrupulous.

I have always been an Inventor, and about a year before Her Majesty ascended the throne, I submitted to his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex a model of a piece of ordnance at Kensington Palace. His Royal Highness' kindness I shall never forget.

I was introduced by his secretary, old Mr. White, and it so happened that Her Majesty, then Princess Victoria, sent in her card two or three times, and His Royal Highness, when I desired to withdraw, said in a good humoured manner, "O! Her Royal Highness can wait a bit." My name is in the Visitor's Book.

In or about 1855, when Sir Cornwall Lewis was about to issue Exchequer Bills, I at once suggested to him Exchequer *Bonds* with *coupons*, as more convenient for merchants, &c., and my plan was adopted, and I received the thanks of Sir Cornwall Lewis; I also had his request to furnish him with my ideas on financial matters from time to time which correspondence can be seen in Downing street.

In 1857 or '58, I wrote and published a plan or scheme for A NEW CIRCULATING MEDIUM, for which I received the thanks of the excellent and lamented Prince Consort.

In April, 1861, I submitted at the Horse Guards a plan for conveying troops across lakes or rivers, which I called Amphibious Locomotives, serving as ambulances on land and as punts on water. Copies may be seen at the Horse Guards. Ordinance Select Committee, March 26, 1861, and Quarter-Master General's Minute 3658 No. 2155, April 19, 1861.

My name is known at Woolwich arsenal, for a plan to throw shells of larger diameter than the bore of the gun, which was tried with success at Woolwich.

February 20, 1876, I submitted a plan for the protection of Her Majesty's ports and arsenals, viz., an impregnable Rotary Floating Battery, drawings of which may be seen at the Admiralty.

April 5, 1876, I submitted to Her Majesty's Government an invention to protect strategic points or passes in Her Majesty's Indian Empire, as well as Great Britain, which has been forwarded to the War Office by Sir Stafford Northcote, together with a letter to His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge; which invention is destined to play a no inconsiderable part in case any of Her Majesty's dominions should ever be attacked, which I have named VICTORIA FORTS in honor of Her Most Gracious Majesty, and which I have presented for Her Majesty's acceptance; it is an IMPREGNABLE, INVISIBLE, ROTARY BATTERY which will keep up a stream of shot in any one direction. The drawings can be seen at the War Office, and I should much like Her Majesty to see the drawings (3 in number).

Thus you see, my dear Mr. Rowsall, I have ever worked for the national good without fee or reward; but it is hard to

sit down and see it stated in the public journals that a memorial is to be erected at public expense to the memory of Rowland Hill, as the ORIGINATOR of the Penny Postage Stamp.

It is this statement in the public papers that has drawn me out of my seclusion to contradict it, or you or the public at large would never have heard of me on the subject, and I hope you and others will pardon me. Rowland Hill carried out my plan and no more.

I am, my dear Mr. Rowsall,

Yours very truly and faithfully,

FRANCIS W. STEVENS.

P.S.—I am well known to the New Zealand Government, having suggested many things, and to Sir Julius Vogel, our late Premier, who recently thanked me for hints on loans, &c., I had given him. My three sons are known to him also, they hold responsible positions under the New Zealand Government.

## SHORT HISTORY OR NARRATIVE OF FACTS.

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My father, William Seaman Stevens, married Miss Mary Foot, daughter of William Foot, landed proprietor and farmer of Chalton, near Shaftesbury, and cousin to the Countess of Harrington, and with my mother he had considerable property. He held a large farm in Hampshire, and afterwards had many vicissitudes in life, and at one time followed the musical profession. He composed and published many musical productions which still bear his name, and on many occasions presided at oratorios in the room of Samuel Wesley, the celebrated organist, the father of the late Dr. Wesley. He was a great friend of Wesley's, and always attended for him whenever his friend Wesley was too unwell to preside himself.

My father had eight children, and I am the youngest of the eight, and am now nearly seventy-two.

When I was quite young, my father, who was a man of



high classical education, opened a school at Stanstead, in Essex, and afterwards removed to Albion House, Loughton, Essex, on the Epping Forest, near the eleventh mile-stone.

In 1827, I purchased the school of my father, and my eldest brother, Mr. William Stevens, of the firm of Stevens, Wood, Wilkinson, and Satchill, solicitors, 6, Queen-street, Cheapside, made out the deed between us.

On 18th December, 1830, I married Miss Barbara Vickers, third daughter of Joseph Vickers, the owner of the Royalty Theatre, Goodman's Fields. This took place at Old Hackney Church, near London.

I carried on the school for many years, and I had numerous scholars. Amongst my very earliest may be mentioned Dr. James Mouat, and his brothers Frederick and Charles; also the Haigs, Dr. Brushfield, &c., who have acquired considerable eminence in the world. Dr. James Mouat I met out here in Auckland, New Zealand, who held the post of Deputy Inspector-General of Hospitals, &c.

In 1833, or thereabouts, I wrote to Lord Althorp, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, relative to an adhesive universal penny postage stamp.

At this time and prior thereto postages were high, the charge being 6d. from London to or from Brighton, 10d. to Birmingham, &c., and 2d. for every letter delivered in the Metropolis of London. Letters from Calcutta, &c., were as much as 2s. and upwards.

I pointed out to Lord Althorp that the revenue would, by my system, be collected in advance by the sale of stamps, instead of being collected by the numerous postmen as heretofore; that the benefit to merchants, tradespeople, and the industrial population of the United Kingdom would be very great; and that the interchange of thought would be accelerated, and ideas and information be spread thereby in a most marvellous manner by such a boon being given to the public at large.

That the increase of revenue by indirect means would be commensurate with the wide-spread advantage; and inasmuch as the first or immediate falling off of the revenue

by such a scheme would be great, I proposed as a counter-balance a penny adhesive stamp also for all parcels and packages carried by public conveyance.

These statements, and other arguments will be found in my letters to Lord Althorp.

I first drew a likeness of William the Fourth, but on consideration put it aside, as he was aged, and as the postage stamp would require to be changed with each succeeding monarch, I resolved to have the Royal arms, which I drew, and this drawing is in the letters sent to Lord Althorp, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, thus—

Government Stamp.



One Penny Postage.

These letters, and copies of Lord Althorp's replies by his secretary, Mr. Wallace, must be amongst the records kept in Downing-street.

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About the years 1833 or 1834, I had occasion for an assistant, and I advertised and had numerous applications. I met the applicants at the Three Nuns Inn, Aldgate, at that period a very respectable inn.

I selected a gentleman whose name was Hill—a Mr. Rowland Hill. He was considerably my senior—some eight or ten years—I was about twenty-six and he about thirty-five. I asked him if he were related to Rowland Hill the preacher, and I think he said “no,” but at this distance of time it is hard to recollect (I am writing now June 3, 1877, or over forty years after the event). I know I asked him for a reference, and he gave me a reference to the master of Bruce Castle School, Tottenham. I will not be sure, but I think I recollect his saying that his father kept a school at Birmingham, and I expressed some surprise; nevertheless I engaged him, and he remained with me till the end of the half-year—about five months.

After business hours I treated him as one of the family and as an equal—not usual in schools.

We used to amuse ourselves after the young gentlemen had retired to rest with music and giving each other lessons, he teaching me French.

My assistant, Mr. Rowland Hill, used to wear a long black frock coat and his hair very long, and in the mornings would take the boys for a run along the riding or gladeway in the forest; and he invariably went without his hat, and I was much amused to see his long hair and coat tails flying as he rushed along in front of the boys. I told him he would take cold if he did so; he said, "Oh, no."

I found him companionable, and we used to relate anecdotes, and he gave me a description of some of his adventures. He used at his leisure to write for one of the magazines, and on one occasion he showed me a P.O. money order for £5 for something he had written; and I saw it and read it, and it was very passable.

As we became familiar, I took from my writing desk copies of letters I had written to Lord Althorp on the subject of the universal adhesive Penny Postage Stamp, and then read them to him. Mr. Hill seemed much pleased, and asked me if I would allow him to write a pamphlet; he said he thought it a capital subject for a pamphlet. I said I thought it was, but that I must decline his offer, as I thought it better I should wait and see what the Government meant to do. I added that I felt myself quite capable of writing a pamphlet if I wanted one.

Time went on, and he asked me again, and I again refused to lend him my papers for him to compose or write a pamphlet.

But one evening, after a pleasant chat and a little wine, &c., I at last lent him my papers, and he promised to write the pamphlet, and then give it me for my signature, or cast it into the fire if I did not like it. He did not appear to get on with it (as I then thought), as I asked him more than once to return my letters. He said he had nearly finished the pamphlet and would show it me in a few days, but never did, and did not return my papers.

I was at this time preparing the young gentlemen for going home for the holidays, and forgot to ask Mr. Rowland Hill for my papers. The school broke up; he left, and did not return, and I saw nothing of him for two or three years, till one day I met him at the Flowerpot, Bishopgate-street. He said he had got a situation as secretary. We had a glass of wine together. He said he was going to Tottenham, and I was going home to Loughton per coach. I never saw him afterwards. I forgot to ask him for my papers, nor did I ever hear of his publishing a pamphlet till the year 1876; so instead of putting my name to it, he actually put his own name as the promoter and originator, when he knew such was not the fact.

In or about 1840 I read in the papers that my Penny Postage Stamp was to be adopted, but with "a likeness of Queen Victoria" instead of the Royal Arms, and on seeing this I said to my wife the head of the Queen is to be used instead of the Royal Arms. I said, now this is only a trick or evasion but whether Royal Arms or Queen's Head, it is still the Penny Postage Stamp, and my invention, and not Rowland Hill's. He never sent me a pamphlet or gave me any intimation of what he was doing, or what was going on, and I was so much engaged in my professional duties I had little time to read newspapers, and thus the whole affair passed on, and even now I should never have noticed it but for the announcement in the papers that a "memorial was to be erected to the honour of Rowland Hill as the *originator* of the Penny Postage Stamp." I could bear this no longer, and felt it my duty to make the whole case public.

The Hon. Mr. Reynolds, our Post-master-General, told me in 1876, that Rowland Hill had received a reward, and that he wrote a pamphlet in 1837, but I was not aware of it before.

Whenever the name of Rowland Hill was mentioned in my presence as the originator of the Penny Postage system I have always contradicted it, and my family and friends are well aware of the fact.

I appeal to the British nation.

FRANCIS WORRELL STEVENS.

Dunedin, New Zealand,

June 5, 1877.